



## LAGUNA PLEIN AIR PAINTERS ASSOCIATION

### LPAPA Plein Talk Q&As with Vanessa Rothe February 2017 Artist Member of the Month

#### ***What is your #1 tip or advice for the beginning plein air painter?***

Know your Values. For a painter it is vital to know and be comfortable with mixing and creating a variety of values in your work. Knowing how they work together in a landscape, is crucial to making a plein air painting work. Distance will have lighter values in general and will have low contrast...subjects that are up close will have a greater variety of values and more contrast.

#### ***If you could only have 5 colors on your palette, what would they be?***

Working with a limited palette is smart when you are beginning. As you can make most color by mixing the primaries. Use just 4-5 colors: Ultramarine Blue, Cadmium Red, Cadmium yellow, White. For plein air work I might add a Chinese Orange or Cerulean blue... for studio work I might add black.

#### ***Why do you choose to paint outside in the wild plein air rather than in the controlled environment of the studio?***

Painting on location is one of the most rewarding experiences I've had in my lifetime. As an artist one notices, often with heightened sense of awareness, all things in the world...beauty, color, light changes, sound, taste, the wind on your face. So to be outside on location in nature and then... in addition...to add the challenge of trying to capture that moment on canvas with colors and paint is truly a delight for the senses. When painting on location one tends to analyze the colors, light, composition, and therefore one thinks about the subject on a deeper level... enjoys it on a deeper level.

#### ***What was your most hair-raising extreme plein air painting experience?***

Definitely painting out on location on a rock in the ocean when the tide rises suddenly, a bit faster than you had imaged, or a rogue wave comes and the danger of being swept out, or pushed against the rocks.

#### ***Living or not, which artist(s) has had the most impact on your artistic journey?***

Living artists have played a major role in my influence and my acquiring skills. The most important are my **academic teachers** at Laguna College of Art and Design, Jonathan Burke and Hope Railey, who have given me my drawing skills, without which I would not be where I am today... Artist friends I often ask advice and help are Jeremy Lipking, Michelle Dunaway and Aaron Westerberg. For **plein air artists** Ray Roberts back in 2001 was my first plein air workshop and has taught me about values and patterns and I sit in on his workshops whenever

I can. Peggi Kroll Roberts has also helped in reminding me constantly to keep lights and dark patterns as the main focus. Scott Burdick is a friend who also helped me to learn about edges. Friend John Burton also has been a great help with the mental aspect of being a professional artist, its challenges and its rewards. Historical artists that I am inspired by are Joaquin Sorolla, John Singer Sargent, William Wendt, Edgar Payne, Eduard Manet, Mary Cassatt, as well as a famed Russian hero Valentin Serov. They all combine strong drawing skills with painterly effects, the combination I admire.

***Any closing comments or advice you'd like to share?***

Advice would be to remind artists to travel, read books, and work as well on the mental aspect of inspiration for stronger subjects in their works and the mental part of being an artist. Use the Decartes method: mind and body, you have to have the technical skills but also have the mental skills and mental library to create interesting subjects. Fill your mind with European cities, go to galleries, read the classics and books that are good at describing scenes and try to recall their words as you sit on a grassy knoll hilltop. What would Keats have said to describe this hill?. See how painters solved problem and teach yourself how to do it then ask yourself, how can I do this better, how can I add to this? A stronger highlight? A better composition? And practice, practice... One thing in my career, as a mother and business gallery owner who needs to make money for her family, is finding the time to practice. If you have time... you are indeed very lucky and so take the opportunity... carpe diem.... as this life will be richer and your days fuller if you are able to practice and get to paint on location, outside in the elements with the wind on your face, and brush in hand....